

**COTTAM SOLAR -OPEN FLOOR HEARING 2 (OFH PARTS 1 & 2) – 7 DECEMBER 2023 – EPIC CENTRE LINCOLN**

**DEADLINE 3 - 19 DECEMBER, 2023**

I concur fully with Interested Parties (IPs) attending this Open Floor Hearing who spoke so compellingly against the Cottam Solar Project and the cumulative effects of Gate Burton, West Burton and Tillbridge Solar projects. I support fully the relevant/written representations/summaries submitted by IPs to the Examining Authority who oppose, challenge and question the Applicant's examination documents and the Applicants 'experts' for this solar scheme including Lincolnshire County Council, West Lindsey District Council, 7000 Acres, Mr R Clegg etc.

Disappointed that Mr Gareth Phillips, Solicitor for the Applicant, Island Green Power, in his representation towards the end of the above Hearing (part 2) found it necessary to criticise/disparage Sir Edward Leigh's representation given at the beginning of this Hearing. As Sir Edward had left the meeting earlier he was unable to comment on or challenge Mr Phillips claims. I believe the derision of Sir Edward by Mr Phillips in Sir Edward Leigh's absence did not help the Applicant's case and in so doing Mr Phillip's judgement in fact was flawed.

Political party membership does not mean one has to agree with all party policy.

I wish to draw the Planning Inspectorate's attention to the *inaccurate* 'evidence' statement made by Mr Phillips at this Hearing. It is staggering that Mr Phillips, at this current stage in the examination process, should make a **factually incorrect** statement in his representation when, in further disparaging Sir Edward Leigh's reference to Lincolnshire being known as the bread basket of the Country, Mr Phillips sets out to negate this by stating "*the evidence all around you is that this part of the world, this part of the country, Lincolnshire, has always been a power base - lots of cooling towers give that game away so whilst yes, there has been a history of agriculture and food production in the county and in the region, there has also been a significant history of power production in Lincolnshire and so what is now proposed in terms of the solar project and any others that come along in the same areas is in keeping with that historic use of this part of the country*". Cottam Power Station and West Burton Power Station to which Mr Phillips was referring are in Nottinghamshire NOT Lincolnshire ! This indicates Mr Phillips has little or no knowledge of Lincolnshire, its people, its history and doesn't care.

These chimneys are Landmarks on the horizon, they do not dominate the landscape / agricultural land as would 10,000 acres of 7,000,000 ground mounted solar panels and all the associated hardware and paraphernalia that comes with industrial scale solar projects of the nature of Cottam Solar.

I disagree with the Applicant's solicitor, Mr Phillips, in his illustration of the percentage amount of land that would be used for ground mounted solar in the UK compared to the amount of land use referred to in the following two paragraphs:-

The set aside land referred to by Mr Phillips as an example of farmland being taken out of agricultural use, is in fact serving nature, it creates habitat for wildlife, insects and other flora and fauna as does re-wilding and is also aiding decarbonisation. This is helping to reinstate the balance of the very threatened decreasing wildlife and will be beneficial to bio-diversity and the farmer. It will provide vital resources for mammals, birds and other species by acting as wildlife corridors allowing species to move between isolated habitats and harbours beneficial insects that predate crops pests. Such natural landscape is beneficial for mental health and in turn physical health to the communities in those areas.

Further Mr Phillips comments and comparison on the amount of land taken up by golf courses does not hold water. Golf courses are green spaces, they are outdoor recreational areas, good for people's health and well-being the benefits from playing golf are already well documented and research shows that it can deliver social value and contributes towards making people happier throughout their lives. Golf's contribution to the economy is significant running into £billions annually and this continues to rise providing jobs across the whole industry of golf, accommodation and tourism, industries and construction and real estate industries. These green spaces are kind to the eye and further are contributing to providing habitat for wildlife. Many golf courses will be home to protected species such as birds, bats, newts, snakes, insects, mammals and plants.

Referencing Mr Phillips use of land for different schemes/leisure activities on page 1 of this submission I consider the Cottam 1 Solar scheme site is a wasteful use of agricultural land. It is not of good design being fragmented over a wide area which I fear will cause even more injurious destruction to the farmland both on and surrounding these fragments during construction, the increased traffic disruption to the narrow lanes accessing these separate parcels, the PRoWs (public footpaths) removal of hedgerows and trees, damage to flora and fauna, bio-diversity, wildlife and the communities that this scheme will affect as opposed to a well-designed and well thought out scheme. **What is the purpose of such fragmentation on this scale ? Is it related to the extensive flooding which occurs on this farmland ?**

Mr Phillips further illustrated products manufactured in China that could / will have been purchased by IPs attending the meeting yet he says they are critical of using 'slave' labour in the solar panel production in that country. I feel it is unfortunate that China dominates the consumer goods market which leaves many people with little choice or option to purchase from elsewhere. I avoid purchasing goods made in China. Further and equally important products/goods manufactured in China are adding hugely to the carbon footprint not only in manufacturing using coal fired power stations but also in transporting them 4,813 miles to the UK.

I felt Mr Phillips was somewhat patronising towards the residents present at the Hearing in his closing comments.

Along with solar panels on the roofs of houses, commercial buildings, factories, hospitals, car parks and brownfield sites there is the capacity for **floating solar** which has been growing exponentially, being one of the fastest-growing power generation technologies. The greatest advantage of floating solar and rooftop solar is that it avoids land acquisition and site preparation issues associated with traditional solar installations. It opens new horizons to scale up solar power, particularly in countries with land constraints, including the UK, a tiny island with finite land resources and an ever increasing population.

Floating solar can produce a higher energy yield due to the cooling effect of water, the costs over time of floating solar are at par with traditional solar PV. Floating solar offers significant opportunities for the expansion of solar energy capacity and should not be dismissed as an opportunity for the UK which, surrounded by water, is an ideal vehicle for this.

In agricultural reservoirs, the solar panels can reduce evaporation, improve water quality, and serve as an energy source for pumping and irrigation.

**Why has Island Green Power not considered floating solar as a way forward** as other European countries are proceeding along this route ?

We are not the Sahara, we are not the one million square kilometres of scorched earth in Australia. While building PV plants with high efficiency around the world due to the high intensity of solar radiation in those regions, which could supply the Mediterranean area, North Africa, and Europe with electricity, the UK is a temperate climate that will not be able to produce energy from solar power when needed most in the winter months and which confirms the huge amount of land space, at least 40-50 times more than coal plants and 90-100 times more than gas, makes ground mounted solar in the UK inefficient. Differences in geographic location have a direct impact on the intensity of solar radiation in addition to changes in wind speed, humidity, dust, and air pollution deposits on the PV panel. Each of these variables cause low productivity and performance fluctuation in PV.

It is important that any solar expansion in the UK does not take away good quality farmland.

#### **BROWNFIELD SITES:**

We are constantly told by the Applicants representatives that brownfield sites were considered for these projects yet despite having asked Cottam, West Burton and Gate Burton solar projects we have no knowledge of where these sites were, who they approached and why they were unsuitable or ruled out.

**Can the Planning Inspectorate please request details from the Applicants of all the Brownfield sites that were seen prior to their consultation process, including providing documentation which confirms the reasons for these brownfield sites having been rejected by them ?**

Thank you. P A Mitchell, 18 December 2023